

Glass Ceiling and Women's Career Development: Evidence from Sri Lankan Logistics Field

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Abstract: Women are entering the labor force in greater numbers than ever before, however women in top leadership positions remain scarce. Scholars have coined the term "glass ceiling" to describe this troubling condition, where women face invisible obstacles while attempting to advance in their careers. The present study is mainly aimed at exploring the glass ceiling and women's career development in the logistics field in Sri Lanka. Qualitative research approach was adopted and in-depth interviews with ten women executives employed in the field of logistics in Sri Lanka contributed towards data collection of the study. The respondents were purposively selected. The thematic analysis revealed four themes as major glass ceiling factors: self-efficacy, family role, social capital and organizational culture. The study proposes recommendations on how women in the field of Logistics can shatter the glass ceiling to reach higher positions and the opportunities to increase women representation in top managerial positions within the field. This research intends to raise women's awareness in order to pave the way for them to rise to the top of the corporate ladder and to include women in strategic decision-making that benefits both the organization and the society.

Keywords: *Glass Ceiling, Logistics, Women's Career Development*

Introduction

Women career development has been a significant and a major source of concern in the recent years. Even though more women graduate and join the workforce, there is still a limited number of women in senior management roles due to the glass ceiling (Mensi-Klarbach, 2014). Women tend to be concentrated at the bottom of the career ladder, with female managers representing a small percentage of those in top positions in almost every country (Linehan, 2002). Such inadequate women representation in strategic level positions shows the existence of glass ceiling phenomenon concerning women career development (Krissetyanti, 2018).

The term "glass ceiling" refers to an unseen upper limit of any organization above which it is difficult or impossible for women to rise to positions of power (Bell et al., 2002). Female leaders may have shorter tenures than their male counterparts, either because they are more likely to be dismissed or replaced, or because they self-select out of the leadership roles (Glass & Cook, 2016). Glass ceiling is the most

important influencing factor in the gap between men and women's career advancement (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2020). According to Kapoor et al. (2021), women were not only less liable to work, but women also earned less for the same type of jobs than men. In most countries, men are still disproportionately responsible for supplying a family's financial demands, while women bear a greater burden of caregiving and family well-being. Despite efforts to improve diversity, a number of studies have concluded that women employed in many fields continue to face a glass ceiling when it comes to higher management positions (Pai & Vaidya, 2009).

The existence of a glass ceiling is debatable with a larger female population, and even though more women graduate and join the workforce, the glass ceiling remains, resulting in a lack of female representation in senior management roles. Nevertheless, women work just as hard as men, if not harder, they may face more barriers to advance in the careers than men (Barnet-Verzat & François-Charles, 2008). Gender gap in career advancement have long been a source of concern for researchers. Since

women tend to be underrepresented in senior roles, there is a possibility that they will face a glass ceiling (Lundberg, 2017).

Table 1 shows the rate of female population as a percentage of total population. Accordingly, female labor force participation is 32.5% whereas more than half of the total population comprises of women. According to the Labor Force Survey data released by the Department of Census and Statistics (2020), female unemployment is higher than male unemployment in all age groups and among youth, contributing more to the country's overall unemployment.

Table 1: Rate of female population and female labour force participation

Year	Female population as a share of total population (%)	Female labor force participation (%)
2016	51.9	35.9
2017	51.9	36.6
2018	52.0	33.5
2019	52.0	34.9
2020	52.1	32.5

Source: Department of Census and Statistics (2020)

Table 2 shows the Unemployment rate by the level of education in Sri Lanka. The G.C.E (A/L) and above group has the highest unemployment rate, which is 9.8%. Female unemployment rates are greater than male unemployment rates at all levels of education. The findings of the DCS survey also indicate that the issue of unemployment is more severe in the case of educated females than it is in the case of educated males.

Karunaratne (2018) highlighted that women's participation in the logistics and transport field in Sri Lanka is less than 3% in a country where the greater majority of the population comprises of women. Logistics is important in Sri Lanka's strategy to become a key player in the global economy. Sri Lanka was ranked 97 among 163 countries based on Logistics Performance Index (LPI) in 2018, with a LPI Score of 2.67 (The

World Bank, 2018). Given Sri Lanka's strategic location, it represents a significant opportunity for the further development of logistics for the betterment of the country. Moreover, limited empirical studies focus on women's career development pertaining to the women employed in Sri Lankan logistics sector. Hence, the study addresses the research question, "What are the glass ceiling factors that impede women's career development?" Therefore, this study examines the barriers affecting the glass ceiling and women's career development in acquiring leadership roles and its influence on women employed in Sri Lankan logistics field.

Table 2: Unemployment Rate by level of education

Level of Education	Unemployment Rate (%)		
	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Male	Female
Total	5.5	4.0	8.5
Grade 10 & below	3.3	2.8	4.5
G.C.E. (O/L)	7.2	5.9	9.8
G.C.E. (A/L) and above	9.8	6.2	13.6

Source: Department of Census and Statistics (2020)

Literature Review

The Wall Street Journal created the term "glass ceiling" to describe the outward barriers that avoid women and minorities from proceeding to the top of business ladders (Pai & Vaidya, 2009). On contrary certain scholars conclude that no glass ceiling exists (Rai & Srivastava, 2008). Furthermore, the authors say that there is an abundance of opportunities for career growth at current global organizations. Consequences of glass ceiling is commonly associated with gender inequalities (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). Women have made technical progress in obtaining entrance to organizations and breaking down the glass ceiling as stated by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). Despite such success stories, most women still, remain stuck in middle management positions. The term glass ceiling exists when there is no objective solution to the logical issue of why women do not progress to higher management roles at the same rate as men. According to Morrison and

Von Glinow (1990), the glass ceiling states invisible obstacles or barriers that prevent women and other minorities from rising to positions of power. According to Wirth (2001), the glass ceiling is commonly presented as a pyramidal shape, and it may exist at various levels within an organization, reaching from junior management to top management.

Women's career development

Women's career development is a concept that discusses about how women climb up the ladder to a higher position (Rosenfeld & Jones, 1987). Moreover, Smith (2012) explored the relationship between women's perception of the glass ceiling and subjective career success. According to Islam and Jantan (2017), women enter the organization through the front door and then encounter certain unseen obstacles that prevent them from progressing in their careers. However, women's advancement into higher positions in organizations is extremely poor. Considerable research suggests that men and women experience executive leadership in different ways, with men's careers being somewhat linear while women's being more interrupted (Kumara & Vinnicombe, 2008).

Glass ceiling factors and women's career development

Self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1977) is the primary perception which drives motivation, increased performances, and healthy emotions of people. Female employees' self-efficacy is influenced by their gender identities and distinct perceptions. Individual's perceptions of their capacity to control situations that affect their lives are referred to as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). According to Schrujier (2006), self-efficacy is the confidence and trust in one's self of being able to excel in performance within their careers. People need motivation as a driver in order to conduct any task that they are obligated to. According to the study of Nixdorff and Rosen (2010), women's self-efficacy has a significant effect on their important skills and abilities, and a lack of self-efficacy may result in a glass ceiling and reduced representation of working women. While women do equally well at work as their male counterparts, they are underrepresented in the senior leadership

positions. Uduwella and Jayatilaka (2019) too found the importance of self-efficacy for women in shattering glass ceiling whereas organizations should design programs to enhance the personal and professional growth of women.

Attitudes of women towards their careers and perceptions are based on the gender identities which will drive their perceived self-efficacy and individual motivations regarding their work expectations. Self-efficacy was appearing to be strongly connected to stress as stated by Rennesund and Saksvik (2010) implying that workers with high levels of self-efficacy towards work activities are less likely to experience stress and burnout. Leadership qualities were found to be favorably connected to occupational self-efficacy (Schyns & Sczesny, 2010). According to (Smith, 2012), the study discovered a significant relationship between subjective career success indicators, self-efficacy, and gender with glass ceiling on career development. Ottu and Inwang (2013), investigated the effect of self-efficacy and internal violence on women's ability to break the industrial glass ceiling and achieve leadership positions in their chosen fields.

In the South Asian context, women often will have to make sacrifices related to their careers mainly due to family commitments, especially for the sake of the children. At the same time, women are considered as a family's secondary source of income (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Similarly, Hoobler et al., (2010), too stated that job role and family role are overlapping or mismatching in certain ways, and that overflow from work duties makes involvement in the family role more complicated and challenging. Women are often faced with balancing multiple roles compared to men which often affect them in making their career decisions (Krissetyanti, 2018). According to Kargwell (2008), women prioritized their families more than their jobs, and women with children needs help from their families to share household responsibilities. Less support from the family results in women's under-representation in senior management positions.

Gender prejudices have fueled fears that women will not be able to advance as quickly as males

in management positions (Tai & Sims, 2005; Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2020). According to Buddhapriya (2009), the family role of women professionals has a significant influence on their work-life challenges and, as a result it is identified as a significant barrier to their career decisions. According to Granqvist and Persson (2005), family related factors hindered women's career development because they spent more time satisfying their family responsibilities, which affects their probabilities to climb up in their career expectations. Jáuregui and Olivos (2018) found that nevertheless women participation in workforce has been increasing, there is a limitation in Peruvian female executive climbing up the career ladder due to family commitments. This is even complicated in Asian society where childcare, responsibilities towards family and even extended family fall on the shoulders of women as their primary duty (Ansari, 2016). Such family commitment would reduce the time available for female employees to devote for their career (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2020)

Social Capital Theory is defined as the “ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Porters, 1998, p.06). Social capital appears to be a positive factor in breaking the glass ceiling in women’s career development that creates a hindrance for women in reaching higher managerial levels. Social capital is identified as the mutual understanding, shared beliefs, and behaviors among members of individual communities and networks (Timberlake, 2005). Much of the literature in studies have already demonstrated the importance of social capital theory in career development (Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Timberlake, 2005; Wang, 2009; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Moreover, Choi (2019) claimed that women's employment history is less extensive than men's, implying that women have less advantageous access to social capital. women are less likely than males to benefit from social networking. However, social capital component serves as a mechanism for advancing women into higher positions in their careers (Lin & Huang, 2005). Since it symbolizes an individual's involvement in exchanging assistance with coworkers and

engaging in mutual issue solving, centrality within the social network displays the degree of someone's social capital.

Metz and Tharenou (2001) further examined that social capital is a potential instrument for higher-level job success and career advancement. Managers with more social capital get promoted faster than those with less social capital (Jáuregui & Olivos, 2018). Researchers believe that utilizing social capital component, women's potentials will be stimulated, leading to advance in their careers. Social capital, which has been linked to a variety of confident career outcomes such as job completion, progress, and social support, can benefit women to fulfill their work goals and break the glass ceiling (Bartol & Zhang, 2007; Wang, 2009). Social capital is said to have a positive impact on women entrepreneurs in Bali (Setini et al., 2020). Authors further confirmed that substantial social capital enables to exchange innovative ideas and information which would add value. In Sri Lankan context, Jayaratne and Dharmasiri (2017) found that cultural implications impede women in social accumulation, which affects their career development.

Similarly, women's overall performance is hindered when they perceive a lack of workplace support (Ely et al., 2012; Thiranagama, 2021). Organizational culture is made up of shared ideas, values, and assumptions among members of an organization. In other words, managerial ideas and assumptions about tasks and workers contribute to build up the organizational culture (Wickramaratne, 2013). According to Bombuwela and Alwis (2013), organizational culture has a substantial effect on women's career development. In fact, women are more likely than male equals to withdraw from full participation in decision-making in the workplace (Ely et al., 2012).

The relationship between organizational culture and the opinion that men and women were treated differently in general, which was linked to the belief that a glass ceiling existed (Aycan, 2004; Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017). The majority of the mechanisms of rejection have been the focus of study on the glass ceiling

and discrimination as the dynamics whereby organizational culture creates a barrier to women's advancement (van Vianen & Fischer, 2002; Goodman et al., 2003). Women may obtain top management roles for the appropriate reasons, but other less favorable organizational traits and policies can hold women from reaching top management positions. According to Goodman et al. (2003), Women are more likely to hold senior management positions in firms with higher turnover and lower average management wages. Therefore, Aycan (2004) stated that female managers have organizational barriers to promotion in the organization, as opposed to male managers, and modifying the organizational culture in which women are immersed may be the most effective strategy to ultimately remove glass ceiling beliefs. However, organizations do not believe the existence of glass ceiling or gender stereotypes available in workplaces which makes the situation even worse (Thiranagama, 2021).

Prior research studies have been carried out analyzing the impact of glass ceiling on women's career development giving emphasis of various industries in Sri Lanka. Women are faced with many barriers mainly in terms of individual, organizational and social barriers, family barriers and cultural barriers in the Sri Lankan apparel sector (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2020; Edirisinghe, 2018; Edirisinghe & Thalgaspiya, 2016). A study has been carried out on glass ceiling and organizational commitment with respect to female school teachers in Anuradhapura District by Pallekumbura and Anjala (2022) and the findings reveal that there exist moderate level glass ceiling which negatively affects the organizational commitment. Sri Lankan academic sector too is no exception where the glass ceiling impedes women career advancement (Lakmali et al., 2019; Madawala et al., 2019). Moreover, Alwis & Rathnayake (2020) revealed that women employed in the construction industry of Sri Lanka too face glass ceiling when climbing up the career ladder.

Impact of glass ceiling on career upward mobility of women managers employed in the Sri Lankan Telecommunication sector was studied by Jayawardane and Sajeewani (2015).

Authors found that work-family conflict is a significant barrier for women career advancement. Glass ceiling exist in the Sri Lankan banking sector has also been explored in existent literature (Perera et al., 2021; Uduwella & Jayatilaka, 2019; Victor & Shamila, 2018; Lakmali et al., 2019). Moreover, Shanika (2021) stated that only a few women lawyers advance to senior positions despite many women enroll in the profession. Findings revealed that women lawyers' perceived gender ideology has an impact on upward career mobility whereas career choice has no significant impact on career advancement. Further, glass ceiling is also seen in the Sri Lankan culinary industry and hotel industry. (De Silva & Thulemark, 2022; Kumara, 2018). Moreover, Vithanagama and Sirisoma (2020) highlighted the need for women empowerment in Sri Lankan Avian industry whereas the need for gender equality, job quality and leadership in breaking the glass ceiling.

However, there is a dearth of studies focusing on glass ceiling and women career development in Sri Lankan logistics sector. By reviewing the organization's informal culture, traditions, and conventions that may work against women's professional advancement, the logistics field could empower majority of female employees. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge the said gap in the literature. With the support of these empirical evidence, the current study advances its research proposition; glass ceiling factors in terms of self-efficacy, family factors, social capital and organizational culture impede women's career development.

Methodology

The present study's research philosophy is interpretivism since it leads to develop new understanding about the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009). Considering the purpose of the study, which is to explore the effects of glass ceiling on women's career development in logistics field of Sri Lanka, an exploratory method was used. Exploratory method allows for fresh insights into a phenomenon as well as clarification of the specific nature of the problem (Saunders et al., 2009). Qualitative method was adopted with the aim of achieving

deeper understanding and explanation on women career development in the logistics sector. The research was carried out as a cross sectional study and female executive employee who are employed in the logistics field is the unit of analysis.

Researchers conducted semi-structured, one-to-one interviews to collect data from respondents. Interview guides are considered as a useful tool for understanding how people make meaning of their actions and the environment around them (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The respondents were selected based on purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling enables the researchers to select the sample in a strategic way with certain research goals in mind (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Having the research objectives in mind, female executives with considerable number of years of experience within the logistics field with education background related to logistics were selected as respondents. The sample size was determined when data collection reached saturation whereas sample size consists of ten female executives employed in Sri Lankan logistics field. The collected responses were presented anonymously within the study in order to protect the confidentiality. Interviews conducted were audio recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed. Based on the transcriptions, coding and themes were developed.

Findings and Discussion

Effects of Self-Efficacy

All respondents could conduct their work and present themselves with confidence and had a good knowledge about their abilities. According to respondents 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8 they were willing to face challenges by taking them as a pillar rather than a drawback. Respondent 2 mentioned that confidence is something inbuilt but respondent 3 said that she had to gradually build her confidence.

“With ups and downs I eventually got adopted to work culture, and it helped me to build my confidence”

Majority of the respondents stated that confidence played a key role when climbing up in their career ladder. Schreijer (2006) claimed that self-efficacy is the confidence and trust in one's self of being able to excel in performance within their careers. Insch et al. (2008) examined that self-awareness can lead to active participation in the development of one's professional life. Internal dispositions of women towards their own beliefs perceptions and attitudes would support or impede their career development (Hussin et al., 2021).

self-efficacy is indeed determined by human motivation, which is primarily rooted in cognitive activity (Bandura, 1989). It is important to develop the capability of decision making while looking at the holistic view. Respondent 2 said that most of the time she had to absorb the issue and work it around.

“You have to actually absorb the practical issue, understand it, and then look at it out of the box”

All the respondents have stated that personal education is not alone enough in order to move up in the career ladder. Most respondents have mentioned that education does not make women stand out. Apart from women's academics, soft skills and technical skills development is always a key role for women's career development. Respondent 1 highlighted that women need to have soft skills to make sure they excel at their work.

“I had to pursue a diploma in health and safety to understand what the health and safety rudiments. I had to learn a lot of technical knowledge by being like a sponge in action. Having educational qualifications would be a door opener but that's not enough to climb up your ladder.”

According to Nixdorff and Rosen (2010) problems with women's self-efficacy could be a sign of systemic faults in educational experiences around the world, making it far more difficult to solve. Majority of the respondents have shown that academics are only entry level qualifications but if women want to stand out in the industry, they need to develop soft skills and technical skills.

Portable skills are those that are applicable and useful in a variety of circumstances and fields of life (Ballout, 2007). According to Nägele and Stalder (2016), the diverse and inclusive career requires portable skills, the desire to embrace unpredictability and change, new learning attempts, personal engagement with multiple occupations, and the formation of various social networks. All the respondents have declared that portable skills such as, communication skills, negotiation skills and people skills were crucial to move forward in their careers. Respondent 9 mentioned that,

“If you don't have the communication skills, networking skills, and if you don't have the people skills, it will be hard for you to move forward only with your academics”

According to Rudman (2001), women require strong interpersonal skills and if a leader lacks these skills, they may make errors that jeopardize their career. The responses too revealed that confidence, cognitive ability, personal education and portable skills are important for women to stand out in their careers.

Influence of family factors

Majority of the respondents have not faced any family interferences. However, four respondents stated that they had to face family interferences at the beginning of their career journey. Respondent 6 explained how she had to manage the influences from her family after the marriage.

“After getting married in the beginning my in-laws didn't want me to do a job because they thought that we are stable”

Family interferences may also take place in terms of career choices. Sometimes the expectations of the family members may differ from the passions of an individual leaving them in a dilemma. This was evident from Respondent 1.

“If I say I did not have any family interferences, that would be a lie. But I became the trailblazer in our family to transform their mindset. With time, I realized that my parents' choice for me wasn't in line with my talents and my passion.”

Career development is influenced by family support. Afza and Newaz (2008) stated that in the new generation, both partners and spouse will support and understand each other, and it will be a driver for women to move forward in terms of their career. Respondent 9 expressed how the support received from spouse and parents are important to excel in her career.

“I tell my parents where I want to go and why I want to get there. They'll always support me. Also, it's important that your partner understands what you are actually expecting in terms of your career”

Respondent 7 also mentioned how she had to convince her family members to achieve her dreams.

“Everybody in my family wanted me to become a medical doctor. I felt that they're not supportive enough to reach my dreams earlier but now my family is very supportive and understanding about my work (...) Trying to balance family responsibility with your workplace as a woman is hard.”

Women in Sri Lankan culture have learned to make career sacrifices for the sake of family responsibilities. Family problems have been demonstrated to reduce women's individual resources of time, energy, and commitment available for work (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2020). Respondent 7 mentioned that she could climb up in the career ladder due to limited family ties.

“Since I don't have any kids and no family issues, I can manage my time.”

According to Granqvist and Persson (2005) family correlated factors hindered women's career development since they consumed more time fulfilling their family responsibilities, which affects their chances to climb up in their career expectations. Respondent 6 highlighted the struggle she had to undergo while striking the balance between work and family life.

“Since my husband and I had to work and get exposed during COVID-19 period, we kept our children at his parents' house and could not be with them for one year or so. Many women quit

their jobs because they need to take care of the children.”

Influence of social capital

Women have always been neglected in the growth of societies and have suffered because of gender inequities. Communities have taken various measures to eradicate discrimination and inequality (Omran et al., 2015). Majority of the respondents mentioned that people tend to assume that women are less capable when it comes to working in industries such as the in the logistics field. Respondent 2 highlighted on the issues arising from cultural aspect due to nature of the work.

“On a cultural basis, it will be wrong if you request for a female to work because one thing it is not safe for a female to work in the night, and it's not culturally accepted in Sri Lanka”

Respondents 1, 4 and 6 stated that even though they have faced difficulties in the beginning they somehow managed to influence their family and surroundings. Respondent 4 said that,

“Women in our generation are very career oriented and very goal driven and because of this the traditional mindsets have started to change. I was able to transform my parents in-law by showing them what I was capable of, by performing well in my duties”

Social network is a vital factor for individuals to thrive in the workplace. Women who have built strong social networks get promoted faster than others (Lin & Huang, 2005). Almost all the respondents pointed out the importance of social networking. Respondent 1 believed that social networking immensely helped her throughout.

“I always believe that network is my net worth, and my social networks helped me immensely to stand out.”

According to Choi (2019), native traditional roles may negatively generate bias views on women's competence as leaders, resulting in fewer women in top managerial positions. All the respondents have mentioned that traditional thinking patterns have now started to reduce

with the increasing number of working women. Respondent 6 explained that,

“I think that now the traditional thinking patterns are slowly reducing because women are taken into organizations more and more”

However, specifically the logistics sector commonly interpreted as a male dominated space. Almost all the respondents stated that they have experienced gender biasness at some point in their career life. Respondent 6 mentioned how this was an issue within the logistics sector.

“This industry has a lot of job roles which are labeled as ‘not suitable for women’ or ‘women cannot handle them.’”

Respondent 7 too confirmed this highlighting the industry specific issues that exist in the logistics sector.

“Of course, in Transportation and Logistics we don't see too many ladies in the field because the biggest issue in Sri Lanka is people think that they have to get retired from the job after getting married or having kids”

Effects of organizational culture

Gender discrimination in the workplace is more likely to be reported by women managers than by men, indicating that it is the most common barrier for women to climb up the career ladder (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 2012). According to Aycan (2004), with respect to work situation, male dominated organizational culture is an obstacle to women's success. Respondent 8 expressed that logistics sector being a male dominant industry, certain people have different mindset towards women holding top positions.

“I have seen some male dominance in logistic field. There are some people who I have seen discriminate women when they come on to higher positions.”

Without proper support and guidance from superiors, it is difficult for women to move ahead with their career. Many of the respondents stated that their superiors were very supportive and guided them despite they were female or male. Respondent 9 expressed the

support she received giving due credits to her superiors.

“My bosses so far, they would always give me the opportunity to excel in whatever I do, they always gave me advice. They always gave me credit and gave me the feedback on where I need to improve”

On contrary, respondent 1 stated that she did not receive adequate support in certain occasions.

“I think in almost all industries, women receive less support and guidance, because they expect double standards from women and sometimes, they are unconsciously biased. Even when I go to the yard people tell me not to stay in the sun.”

Kuruppuarachchi and Surangi, (2020) found that in Sri Lankan context, most of the female employees in their sample are not satisfied with the quality of organizational environment, thus more attention needs to be given on ensuring gender equity and equality within the organizations. Management of certain organizations has the impression that women find it difficult to work for extended hours due to family commitments. At the same time, women who do not accept certain training programmes or opportunities where they have to leave families behind, are deemed as not ambitious in their careers (Ansari, 2016).

Most respondents revealed that they received support from superiors both male and female. However, Respondent 2 highlighted that the support she received from the female managers were higher compared to male superiors.

“Female superiors were a little bit more supportive and it's a part of the whole motherly pattern.”

Hussin et al. (2021) mentioned that if women are to break through the glass ceiling, they require top management's support and guidance. Women expect a woman manager to have a higher level of emotional empathy and support than a male superior and expect a female boss to treat them as equals, to see them as whole individuals, to comprehend the complexities (Hurst et al., 2017). Therefore, it can be deduced that gender favoritism within the workplace and guidance from superiors can

act as a support or barrier for women's career development in the Sri Lankan Logistics field.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to explore the glass ceiling on women's career development in Sri Lankan logistics sector. The findings revealed four main factors in terms of self-efficacy, family role, social capital and organizational culture. Self-efficacy is important for women to advance in their careers. self-confidence and awareness about their skills and abilities are main drivers for women to overcome drawbacks. Education is important as it remains a prerequisite to enter the industry, but to climb up the career ladder, education alone is not adequate. Researchers also found that in order for women to stand out in the competitive job arena and to reach higher positions within the industry, they need to essentially possess portable skills, soft skills, technical skills and the ability to decipher critical situations, while looking at the big picture. Uduwella and Jayatilaka (2019) recommended that organizations may come up with mentoring programmes for female executives.

Secondly, the findings revealed that women with family support are more likely to advance in their career than women who do not receive sufficient support from their families. In this study, findings emphasized that there were some instances where the in-laws acted as a barrier to continue their professional life in the beginning while some women experienced their spouses being adequately supportive for them in terms of their career expectations.

Thirdly, under the theme of social capital, findings showed the importance of networking. Women often face cultural and traditional barriers in terms of their career expectations specially during the initial stage of their profession. People tend to assume that women are less capable when it comes to working in industries such as Logistics. However, women in the logistics field have the capacity to manage and overcome cultural and traditional perspectives of the society.

Further the study discovered that women who receive more support and guidance from their superiors have more possibilities to break the glass ceiling and move forward to top positions within the field than women who does not receive adequate or sufficient support from their superiors. Women expect a woman manager to have a higher level of emotional empathy and support, treat them equal and to comprehend the complexities.

In addition to commonly identified barriers on women's career development, the present study also unveiled industry specific barriers. Predominantly, the logistics industry being a male dominated industry, women tend to experience certain barriers in climbing up the career ladder compared to their male counterparts. Specially with around the clock operations, it will be somewhat disadvantageous for women employees who juggle with their family responsibilities. Organization support could be enhanced by creating a friendly environment with flexible working hours and day care centers to facilitate on-site childcare. Similarly, women too should be given adequate training and exposure in the field work enabling them to get the grassroot level experience.

The findings of the study contribute to an in-depth understanding on women's career development to the strategic level in the field of logistics. The study will be beneficial for the

organizations in the field of logistics in order to strengthen women empowerment. Nevertheless, certain organizations perceive glass ceiling as a mere myth or self-created barrier. Organizations do have a huge role to play in terms of creating an attractive working environment for female employees where they do not feel being prejudiced.

The study was mainly limited to the executive level women employees in logistics field in Sri Lanka. Since the current study is a qualitative study, future research may be carried out embedding quantitative techniques as well as in-depth analysis of glass ceiling in the context. Moreover, future studies may be carried out to examine the glass ceiling on women's career development in other industries. Barriers towards advancing female careers in the high-tech sector is another emerging area of glass ceiling research as highlighted by Cross and Linehan (2006) which could also be explored in the Sri Lankan context.

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